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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 000319

SIPDIS

GENEVA FOR JCIC, DEPT FOR VCI/SI

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TAGS: PARM PREL MCAP RO RS

SUBJECT: RUSSIAN REACTION TO ROMANIAN SM-3 MISSILE DEFENSE:  
WE'RE NOT ALARMED, BUT WE STILL DON'T BELIEVE YOU

Classified By: DCM Eric Rubin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Official Russia remained calm in the face of the Romanian announcement that U.S. SM-3 missile defense interceptors would be deployed there. Although there were echoes of Putin's late December complaints that the U.S. missile defense program threatened a START follow-on, government statements were mostly limited to requests for further details. Experts and officials noted possible issues raised by the Montreux Convention and the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and there remains considerable reluctance to accept U.S. assurances that the deployment is meant only for countering an Iranian threat. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Discounting the off-message blast from CHOD General Nikolay Makarov, who claimed U.S. missile defense plans were preventing completion of the START follow-on treaty, official reaction to the announcement by the Romanian government of its agreement with the U.S. to deploy SM-3 ballistic missile defense systems has been moderate. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov raised a possible complication for Black Sea region MD deployment, observing that Romania is a signatory to the Montreux Convention, which limits the number and size of warships operating in the Black Sea. Lavrov asked for a "comprehensive answer" to the question of the convention's impact. He also noted that the U.S. and Russia agreed to undertake a joint analysis of ballistic missile threats, and called for wider participation by European countries, particularly Germany.

¶3. (SBU) Russian ambassador to NATO Dmitriy Rogozin denied the Romania basing plans would have any impact on the successful completion of the START follow-on negotiations, but he added that Russia expects the U.S. to provide technical data on the interceptors planned for Romania in order to ensure that they do not threaten Russia's offensive strategic weapons. Deputy Prime Minister Sergey Ivanov told the Munich Security Conference that Russia will demand detailed explanations from the U.S. of its MD basing plans in Romania, claiming that details of capabilities and infrastructure are still lacking. Ivanov complained that it was difficult for Russia to implement reductions in its nuclear forces when the U.S. was actively pursuing strategic missile defenses.

¶4. (SBU) Chair of the Duma international affairs committee Konstantin Kosachev insisted that the Romanian basing demonstrated again the inseparability of strategic offensive and defensive systems. He complained that the Romanian announcement demonstrated a lack of good faith by the U.S. as

it had earlier agreed to consult with Russia on future MD deployments. He chided the U.S. for giving in to the "petty ambitions" of Bucharest after reconsidering the previous administration's plans for interceptors in Poland and radar in the Czech Republic.

¶5. (SBU) While expert opinion outside the government was on balance not very critical, several commentators noted the apparent lack of consultation with Moscow and the SM-3's potential for threatening Russian ICBMs after further improvements. U.S. and Canada Institute director Sergey Rogov also noted a possible connection between a Romanian MD deployment and the 1997 commitments of the U.S. and Russia, in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, to refrain from basing "substantial military forces" on the territories of the new NATO members. Retired Major General Vladimir Dvorkin, former head of a strategic weapons research institute, said the Romanian announcement illustrated the need for full cooperation among the U.S., Europe, and Russia in the construction of a joint missile defense system.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: News of the Romanian MD agreement came as Russia unveiled its new military doctrine, which identified NATO enlargement and missile defense as threats to Russia's security. While the GOR is still developing a detailed response to the U.S. offer of extensive cooperation on missile defense, the technical potential of the SM-3 and the radars planned for phase 1 of the Phased Adaptive Array, which Russians claim can reach their western missile fields, appear to many here to justify the threat assessment contained in the new doctrine. Regardless of the technical

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facts, many Russians, in and out of government, will continue to dismiss U.S. claims that PAA is meant only to counter the threat from Iran. The negative GOR reaction also stems from the timing of the announcement -- during the home-stretch of START negotiations, which have been bedeviled throughout by MD issues. End comment.

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